

What playing Call of Duty taught me about entrepreneurship

I am not a gamer. Unless you count way too many hours playing 2048 as gaming, then I am. But really, I'm not. So I apologise in advance for making up my own lingo and not knowing all the hacks and rules. Gamers, stay with me, this is going to be worth it despite lack of COD skills (I am only at level 46).

Let's start from the beginning. A few weeks ago we were having a quiet night at home and my partner was playing Call of Duty. I wanted to try, so I downloaded the app to my phone... and the rest is history. As any other well designed game, this one is meant to make you stay for hours on end. So I did, *#sorrynotsorry* — what happened the other day is the interesting part of this story. I was discussing Entrepreneurship with a friend who said "in business, you need to keep moving all the time" and the first thought that came into my head was: *"just like in Call of Duty"*. That got me to want to dig deeper and here is what COD taught me about running a business:

At first, you'll be all over the place

The very first rounds (days?) of playing a "shoot to kill" game are all about surviving without having any survival skills. You are playing with four team

mates and against a team of five, but to be honest, it feels like you are all alone and you shoot right and left until you are all out of ammo. In a tempo that you can't humanly manage. There is no plan, strategy or map, you just run around. *Or at least, I did.*

It's not very different from what starting a business feels like. You. Just. Want. To. Survive. You aim at any client who would be willing to buy whatever you are offering. Although you are surrounded by people who are there to help you, you feel all alone. And at this point, there is yet not a strategy in place.

You need to keep moving

Or you'll die. A very bad strategy in COD — and business — is to stand still for too long. Either someone will spot you and shoot you, or a competitor will outsmart you if you are not on your toes. Constant movement requires focus, otherwise you will just keep running around with no purpose. That has never been a good strategy.

You need to watch your back

We are programmed to move forward. I am not an expert on neuroscience, but society bombards us (*oh! unintentional joke!*) with quotes on looking straight ahead, which, — I believe —decreases our ability to look over our shoulder (not the quotes per se, but the mindset.)

The most important thing I learned from playing Call of Duty (*trust me or not on this one, but at the time of writing I made it to level 46 after all*) is to watch your back. Because most of the time you get shot will be from behind. In computer games and business. If you are not observant, someone will sooner or later take you out and you won't see it coming.

It's a team game

It's not an accident that one of the things you hear the most during a game of COD is "*Reloading, cover me*". This is a team game and you can't make it very far alone. Plus, it's the team score that determines whether you win or loose. You can aim at becoming the MVP, but it will still be a joint effort.

Regardless of what your company structure looks like, whether you are a Solopreneur or have a team of employees, Entrepreneurship is a team game. Every move you make in your business should lead to a win for all involved (*I know that I'm being idealistic at this moment, but let's for the sake of the game pretend that it's possible*), and even if it might not seem obvious to you,

you do have a team of people around you depending on you playing the game.

Equipment is important

To some degree. My partner would disagree here and say that equipment is everything, so let's compromise and say that you can't win a battle with wrong weapons. Try to optimize all your tools and you will level up faster.

Don't run out of ammunition

Especially if you are in the first stages of the game (or the business) and you are shooting at everything. It's easy to run out of ammo, whether it's bullets, money, hours or your energy. Needless to say, you can't operate on an empty tank.

You will level up

Suddenly, from one day to the next it feels like, you will start seeing patterns and scenarios, you will be one step ahead of your competition and you will keep up with what your team is doing. Practice makes perfect and the feeling of being on top of the game is worth every hour you put in.

Let's stop talking about the game now (*although, I admit, I have put in a few too many hours into COD*) and from this point on focus on Entrepreneurship. You are probably perfectly aware of the fact that the amount of effort you put in is equal to the outcome ahead. You won't be able to level up at Entrepreneurship if you aren't willing to do the work that's required. But if you will roll up your sleeves and go after those goals, sooner or later you will see yourself at a much higher level than you ever thought possible.

So let's sum this up. This is what Call of Duty taught me about running a business:

1. In the beginning you know nothing
2. Keep moving
3. Watch your back
4. Be a team player
5. Gear up
6. Don't run out of resources
7. Suddenly you'll have it all figured out!

Maybe playing a game on your phone once in a while isn't as bad as they say...

Magdalena brings ideas to the table. Expert in idea generation and creative business thinking. Based in Sweden, working globally in Swedish, English and Polish. MBE & MLL, Rescue Dog Mother, Coffee Lover.

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Idea Generation for Beginners

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